

# **The First Week of Advent!**

## **Sunday: The Jesse Tree**

The Jesse tree was created to help people link the custom of decorating Christmas trees to the events leading up to Jesus birth. The tradition of decorating Christmas trees actually predates the arrival of Christianity in western Europe and was adopted by the early Church. In order to associate the custom more clearly with Christianity, people made Jesse trees—Christmas trees with decorations related to the events of Jesus’ birth and the prophecies about him in the Old Testament. Many parishes and families make Jesse trees during Advent to remind them of these events as they prepare for Christmas.

The story of Jesse, the father of David, is told in [Isaiah 11:1-10](#).  
David’s story is found in [1 Samuel 16:1-13](#).

## **Monday: Adam and Eve** **Ornament: Apple**

### **Adam and Eve and the First Sin**

Genesis 3 tells how Adam and Eve’s intimacy with God and with each other is disrupted. The serpent enters the scene. The serpent represents anything that can separate a person from God. The woman, with the man as her silent partner, speaks to the serpent. They examine the possibility of disobeying God. Will Adam and Eve accept God’s moral order and trust in his love?

Adam and Eve — [Genesis 2:4-24](#)  
The Fall of Adam and Eve — [Genesis 3](#)

## **Tuesday: Noah** **Ornament: Ark**

### **Noah and the Flood**

The story of Noah is told to illustrate how deeply the human family has fallen into sinfulness. Sin is now so universal that a troubled God decides to complete the work of destruction that the human family has begun ([Genesis 6:13](#)). However, God sees that Noah is a good man and decides that humanity will survive through Noah’s family. God tells Noah to build an ark, which God will use to save Noah’s family and members of the animal kingdom. God is pained by and disappointed in humankind, but in his mercy he will save the human family through Noah.

Noah and the Flood — [Genesis 6-9](#)

## **Wednesday: Abraham**

### **Ornament: Field of Stars**

#### **Abraham and the Covenant**

Abraham stands before God, facing the future. God had promised that Abraham would be the father of many descendants, but his wife, Sarah, seems unable to have children. So Abraham believes he will die childless and that his steward, Eliezer, will be his heir. God assures Abraham that this will not happen, promising Abraham that he will have a son with Sarah. More than that, the descendants of Abraham will be as numerous as the stars in the sky.

The Call of Abraham — [Genesis 12](#)

God's Covenant with Abraham — [Genesis 15](#)

## **Thursday: Isaac**

### **Ornament: Ram**

#### **Abraham and the Offering of Isaac**

Then, unexpectedly, God sends an angel with the message that Abraham must sacrifice his son Isaac. As bitter as the message is, and as hopeless as it makes Abraham feel, he obeys without hesitation. He gathers his servants and Isaac with wood for the sacrifice and sets out to the appointed place. The last part of the way he goes alone with Isaac, who is made to carry the wood for his own sacrifice. On the way, Isaac asks his father what animal will be sacrificed. Abraham answers that God will provide.

Abraham and Isaac — [Genesis 22](#)

## **Friday: Jacob**

### **Ornament: Ladder**

#### **Jacob's Dream**

While on his journey, Jacob arrives at a certain place and rests there, using a stone for a pillow. In a dream, he receives a divine revelation. He sees a ladder, or perhaps a ramp, going up from earth to heaven. The shape of Jacob's vision may have been inspired by the shape of the ziggurats of Babylon, which had ramps going up their sides to the place where the deity was said to dwell. On the ramp in Jacob's dream are angels, roaming up and down, patrolling the earth and reporting back to God. In his vision, Jacob meets God. God confirms the covenant made to Abraham and to Isaac that their ancestors will be as plentiful as the dust on the ground and will spread from east to west. Jacob will also receive God's protection wherever he goes.

Jacob and Esau — [Genesis 25:19-34; 27](#)

Jacob's Vision of God — [Genesis 28:10-22](#)

Jacob Returns to the Land of His Fathers — [Genesis 31-33](#)

# Saturday: Joseph

## Ornament: Coat of Many Colors

### Joseph and God's Providence

Pharaoh has Joseph brought before him. Joseph hears the dreams and correctly interprets their meaning. The seven fat cows and stalks of grain are seven years in which harvests will be abundant and the cows will be fat. The next seven years will be a period of famine. After interpreting the dreams, Joseph advises that Pharaoh appoint someone to oversee the harvesting and ensure that enough grain is saved in the first seven years to help Egypt survive the seven years of famine. Pharaoh agrees and appoints Joseph vizier, second in authority only to Pharaoh himself, to carry out the plan. Joseph marries an Egyptian woman and has two sons. The first he names Manasseh ("forgotten"), to show that his previous suffering has been forgotten. The second is Ephraim ("God has made me fruitful").

Joseph and His Brothers — [Genesis 37](#)

Joseph and Pharaoh — [Genesis 39-41](#)

Joseph and His Brothers Are Reconciled — [Genesis 42-45](#)

## **The Second Week of Advent!**

### **Sunday: Moses**

#### **Ornament: Burning Bush**

##### **God Calls Moses**

God answers Moses, “I am who I am” (Yahweh). Other meanings of God’s answer can be “I come to be all that exists” and “I cause to be all that happens.” God seems to be saying that God will come in his own time and will not be controlled by Moses. God will be who he will be. He came to save the people because it is his choice. “And he said, ‘I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, “The Lord”; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy’” ([Exodus 33:19](#)).

Moses Meets God in the Burning Bush — [Exodus 3](#)

### **Monday: The Israelites**

#### **Ornament: Lamb**

##### **Passover and Exodus**

Moses gathers the people. He orders that a lamb be sacrificed and the blood of the lamb be put on the doorframes of the houses. This will be a sign to God to “pass over” the houses of the Hebrews. That night the Hebrews eat roasted lamb and unleavened bread, preparing for the journey. Egyptian houses are filled with mourning, “for there was not a house without someone dead” ([Exodus 12:30](#)). Pharaoh, finally convinced that he cannot defeat God, lets the people go.

Passover — [Exodus 12:1-28](#)

### **Tuesday: Moses and Aaron**

#### **Ornament: Tablets of the Torah**

##### **God Gives the People the Law**

When Moses and Aaron go up on Mount Sinai, God first reminds them of what he has done for them: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” ([Exodus 20:2](#)). He then tells them what they need to do in order to live in relationship with God and one another. We call these instructions the Ten Commandments.

The Ten Commandments — [Exodus 20:1-21](#)

## **Wednesday: Joshua**

### **Ornament: Ram's Horn Trumpet**

#### **Joshua and the Fall of Jericho**

Joshua led the Hebrew people from success to success in conquering the land of Canaan. The biblical writer attributes this to his obedience and faithfulness to God. The Canaanite people were defeated, their cities were destroyed, and the spoils of war were offered to God. Like Moses, Joshua was successful until his death, at the age of 110, the same age of Joseph at his death.

Rahab and the Fall of Jericho — [Joshua 6:1-20](#)

## **Thursday: Gideon**

### **Ornament: Clay Water Pitcher**

#### **Gideon's Unlikely Victory**

Gideon, a farmer, is threshing his wheat in a winepress so that he can hide it from the Midianites. When God tells him that he will lead the Hebrew people against their enemies, Gideon ridicules the idea. He tells God that God abandoned the people and does not seem prepared to keep his promises. God is not put off; he gives the task to Gideon and promises that he will be with him. Gideon does not think much of God's choice, as his tribe is among the smallest. God, of course, realizes this. God wants to emphasize that when victory comes, it comes from God. The Hebrew people will never win if they depend on themselves.

Gideon's Small Army — [Judges 7:15-23](#)

## **Friday: Ruth**

### **Ornament: Grain**

#### **Ruth's Faithfulness**

Naomi is troubled, knowing that she cannot stay in Moab with no one to protect her. She decides to return to Bethlehem and tells her daughters-in-law to return to the protection of their own families. One daughter-in-law, Orpah, returns to her family. The other, Ruth, stays with Naomi and asks not to be separated from her. Ruth remains faithful to Naomi and goes into the fields to glean among the barley. (After the grain was harvested, the poor were permitted to go into the fields to gather any grain that was left behind.) While Ruth is working in the fields, she meets Boaz, the landowner, who is attracted to her and hears her story. Moved in his heart, he tells his workers to make sure that Ruth has plenty of grain to gather.

Naomi and Ruth — [Ruth 4:14-22](#)

## **Saturday: Samuel**

### **Ornament: Crown**

#### **Samuel and the Beginning of the Kingdom**

Saul is a member of the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest of the tribes. He is described as handsome and tall, a man of substance. His father, a wealthy man, loses a number of donkeys. Saul goes in search of them but cannot find them. Told of a holy man in a nearby town, Saul goes to see him to ask if he can help Saul find the donkeys. Samuel is in the shrine of the town, conducting the sacrifices. When Samuel sees Saul, he realizes that Saul is the man God has told him about in a dream. God told Samuel that Saul is the man who will help free the people from the Philistines.

God Calls to Samuel — [1 Samuel 3](#)

Samuel and Saul — [1 Samuel 9:27-10:24](#)